DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 170 436 UD 019 417

AUTHOR Plaxman, Erwin
TITLE Review of Research on the Characteristics of Low Status College Students.
PUB DATE [79]
NOTE 25p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Academic Aspiration; *College Students; Economically Disadvantaged; Higher Education; *Low Achievement Factors; *Lower Class Students; Low Level Aspiration; Motivation; *Personality Problems; *Psychological Characteristics; Socioeconomic Influences; *Student Characteristics; Success Factors

ABSTRACT

This paper refers to data collected in a number of large scale national studies and to the findings of a number of smaller studies to suggest that factors in the personal characteristics of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds explain the underrepresentation of blacks, Hispanics and other low status students in higher education institutions. The topics addressed in this review include: (1) the educational, personal, social and vocational aspirations, values, and expectations of low status students and the relationship of these goals and beliefs to their academic motivation and achievement in college; (2) the academic personality characteristics of low status students and how these characteristics are conducive to success in higher education; and (3) to what degree these students are persisting in college and what personal and institutional factors are most predictive of retention or dropout. A list of references is included. (Author/EB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED170436

Review of Research on the Characteristics of Low Status College Students

Erwin Flaxman

Introduction

As a result of the national concern for the equalization of opportunity during the sixties there was a greater demand for higher education in all segments of the population. Actual college attendance, however, as a number of studies have shown, was highly dependent on family income and racial and social background. In 1972, students from families with incomes of more than $15,000 had almost three times the chance of full-time enrollment than youths from families with incomes below $6,000 (College Entrance Examination Board, 1973). Even controlling for ability, which many people feel is the reason that poor and minority youth have been underrepresented in higher education, researchers have shown in a number of studies conducted in the late sixties that higher socioeconomic status students have a substantially greater post-high school attainment (college attendance, graduation, or an advanced degree) than lower socioeconomic status students, regardless of ability (College Entrance Examination Board; 1973; Sewell, 1971). As a result, a number of opportunity programs were created to make it financially possible for poor students to attend college. Coupled with a policy of more open access for students whose ability to succeed academically in college had not yet been adequately demonstrated or measured by traditional indicators (high school grade point average or academic aptitude tests), opportunities for these youth increased in the early seventies, although it is still the case that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds remain underrepresented in higher education institutions, especially four-year colleges (College Entrance Examination Board, 1973).

US019417

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

E. Flaxman

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Access to higher education will not insure that the low social status students now constituting the population of "new students" in colleges and universities will succeed in securing the post high-school attainment which will credential them and increase their social opportunities and social mobility. This attainment will be a function of their characteristic response to higher education on the one hand and the institutional response to this population on the other. From the data collected in a number of large-scale national studies of this population and from the findings of a number of smaller studies, it is possible to point to the factors in the personal characteristics of these low status students and their college experience that can explain their current status in higher education institutions.

To do so, the following review addresses interrelated questions:

1. What are the aspirations, values, and expectations of these students--educational, personal, social and vocational--and what is the relationship of these goals and beliefs to their academic motivation and achievement in college?

2. What are the academic personality characteristics of these students, and particularly how are these characteristics conducive to success in higher education?

3. To what degree are these students persisting in college, and what personal and institutional factors are most predictive of retention or dropout?

Academic Aspirations

Studies of low educational status and non-white college students consistently show that they have high academic aspirations. In their analysis of the data collected in the American Council on Education Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) in cooperation with the Carnegie Commission of Higher Education in the late sixties and

early seventies on a representative sample of college students, including those in special programs for the disadvantaged, Astin, Astin, Bisconti, and Frankel (1972) found that black and Puerto Rican students especially seem to have relatively higher academic aspirations than do college students in general. It has also been found that more black students than non-black students aspire to a graduate degree, and to insure admission to college are more likely to submit more than one application (Bayer and Boruch, 1969). Among 1970 freshmen at predominantly black colleges, fewer than one-third planned to stop at a bachelor's degree, and 40 percent hoped to attain a master's degree (Astin, et al, 1972).

It has often been maintained, however, that these high aspirations are unrealistic, that the fear of failure that is characteristic of low ability disadvantaged students results in their having aspirations that they are unlikely to meet (Cross, 1971; Dispenzieri, Giniger, Reichman, and Levy, 1971; Froomkin, 1970). Atkinson and Feather (1966) point out in their theory of achievement motivation that the typically achievement-oriented person works hardest at a task of intermediate difficulty in order to derive the greatest satisfaction; a too-easy task would offer no feeling of success, and a too difficult one would likely not sufficiently be rewarding. For the failure-threatened individual, the task of intermediate difficulty is most dangerous because its outcome is uncertain. He can defend himself against the threat of failure by selecting easy tasks with assured success or such difficult tasks that failure is expected and inevitable and therefore is not threatening. Thus, it has been argued that the high aspirations of low status students masks a fear of failure at carrying out a task within their range. Further, in explaining the higher aspirations of low-scoring minority youth, Coleman and his associates (1966) maintain that

minority youth have no opportunity to evaluate their performance realistically when they are enrolled in educationally disadvantaged and socially and racially isolated schools.

More significant, however, is that blacks particularly have consistently expressed expectations for success, which are in marked contrast to their values and aspirations (Lott and Lott, 1963; Philips, 1972). This discrepancy between aspiration and expectancy, which seems to inhibit effective academic orientations and success may be the result of social influence. Gordon (1976) and Ogbu (1974) argue that the young minority poor child is socialized to expect few returns for his efforts--situationally in the schools and through other social institutions and, interpersonally, most markedly through interaction with his teachers. The child learns that because of the rigid social stratification of the school and community, he can anticipate that he will not be able to satisfy his aspirations, although he clings to them.

In this connection, Banks and Mc Quater (1976) have argued quite differently; they maintain that the research has not adequately demonstrated consistent patterns of discriminative evaluations of black students by white teachers. They maintain that the debilitating effects which a white teacher may have on the achievement strivings of black students may ironically result from his supportiveness. Their research shows that the support of a white evaluative agent (as opposed to a black one) tends to evoke low-interest and low-effort achievement characteristics. This seems to suggest that the minority youth, given his previous socialization, in making social comparisons between himself and his white "other", tends to reject the standard of correctness of the "other", and negatively assesses the desirability of the "other's" opinions, beliefs, and attitudes. This

line of research points out the importance of recognizing social influence in understanding the discrepancy between the high aspirations of minority students and their performance, and goes beyond intrapersonal or trait-based explanations for achievement orientations.

It must also be kept in mind that although low socioeconomic status and minority students have academic aspirations equal to or even higher than students in general, their financial situation is an important factor in their remaining in college and continuing their education. Astin, et al (1972) found that in their case study subsample of students in special programs, 70 percent said that scholarships and loans were 50 percent of their funds as against 27 percent of students in general, and that only 17 percent of the special students depended on family support as opposed to 54 percent of the regular students. Despite financialaid, one out of every four special students had to work, as opposed to 17 percent of the regular students. In his study of college dropouts, Astin (1975) found that in general a student had a better chance of remaining in college if he received a major part of his support from his parents, a scholarship or grant rather than a loan--the amount is particularly important for the persistence of black students--and if any employment is for fewer than twenty-five hours per week. Gurin and Epps (1975) found in their study of students in black colleges that in 1970 close to half of all graduating seniors believed they lacked the financial resources to attend graduate school and in 1968 a third of the seniors felt that the usual fellowship offering $2,000 to $2,500 for living expenses would not meet their obligations even if they could defer paying their undergraduate loans until they finish graduate school. Clearly financial pressures and indebtedness are important factors in the special student's ability to fulfill his academic aspirations.

Vocational Aspirations and Goals

The vocational aspirations and career plans of non-white college students exhibit some striking differences from those of white college students, and further non-white college students can be differentiated from each other in career plans. Bayer (1972) in a study of non-white students who entered college as freshmen in 1971 found that a high proportion of Asian Americans (17.2 percent) planned to major in engineering as opposed to the national norm of 1971 freshmen of 7.2 percent, which was similar to the proportions of Spanish-surnamed and Native American students who planned to study engineering. Of the black students, however, only 4.3 percent had such plans. All of the non-whites were more interested in medical careers than were freshmen in general, especially Asian-Americans. In contrast, with respect to business careers, among the non-whites only black students were more interested than all 1971 freshmen in such careers. Whereas the national norm was 10.7 percent, the proportion of black freshmen was 13 percent, as much as 8 percent higher than the proportion of Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Spanish-surnamed freshmen planning such careers.

Equally significant are the changes that have occurred in the career plans of non-white college students from the middle sixties to the early seventies. Using data on non-white college students collected in 1965 and on 1970 non-white college graduates collected by the American Council of Education CIRP program, Astin and Bisconti (1973)

found that in general the two groups differed in career plans and that the changes brought the 1970 non-white graduates closer to their white classmates. Between 1965 and 1970, the proportion of black men who chose business increased from 3 percent to 21 percent, while the proportion of all men rose from 6 percent to 19 percent. Engineering continued to draw only small percentages of all non-white men, especially blacks, but these represented a fair increase. Fewer non-white graduates planned scientific careers--8 percent in 1970 as compared with 23 percent for men and 25 percent for women in 1965. There were substantial gains in college teaching as a career choice for both black men and black women while elementary and secondary school teaching dropped as a choice for black men. Nevertheless, non-white women, like their white classmates, tended to concentrate on elementary and secondary teaching careers (44 percent in 1965 and 47 percent in 1970), although in 1970 more non-white graduates planned to be college professors (7 percent versus 1 percent in 1965). In an earlier analysis of students in special higher education programs, Astin, et al (1972) found that law was chosen as a career more by Spanish-speaking students than by students in other racial/ethnic groups, and that non-MD health professions, engineering, and scientific research were particularly unpopular among these students.

Black students particularly have traditionally sought professional careers since minority groups, especially color minority groups, have been consistently discriminated against in business and industry. Blacks have sought the teaching and social service professions as a means of being assured a clientele within a segregated society. These data suggest an increased diversity in career goals. This shift away from the vocational

orientation of the service professional toward business was also found in comparing the goals of a 1964 sample with a 1970 sample of students in black colleges, who might be thought to be even more traditional, although among these students the service orientation remained very strong (Gurin and Epps, 1975).

The students in the black colleges (above) in both samples aspired to jobs of high prestige, ability demands, social difficulty, and nontraditionality. It was also found that their occupational aspirations were realistic; i.e., there was no substantial discrepancy between the ability required for a student's occupational choice and the percentile of the class that the student's cumulative grade point average represented. Of note also was the finding that despite the stereotyped notion of the dominance of black women, particularly among the lower classes, the female black students in these colleges matched the academic and vocational aspirations of college women in general. They were less likely to go to graduate school and more likely to choose occupations traditionally attractive to and associated with women. The character and level of their aspiration was as sex differentiated as that of college students in general (Gurin and Epps, 1975).

Minority students, especially blacks, stress security as an essential element in their lives, regardless of socioeconomic class. This may explain the value that they place on becoming an authority in a special field as well as being well off financially or being successful in one's business. However, there is also evidence that a life goal is to help others among both black and Spanish-speaking students (Astin, et al, 1972). Of the desirable jobs mentioned by the students in black

colleges in the 1970 sample, there was an increased concern for social relevance and a stronger commitment to work in the black community, even among students who shifted toward careers in law, social science, and business and away from the more overtly service-oriented professions (Gurin and Epps, 1975).

Academic Personality and Motivation

Because of a past neglect in inquiring into the personality organization of ethnic minority and low status groups there is now an increasing effort to determine the pattern of motivational and affective variables among these groups. This understanding is particularly important in making predictions about their persistence and success in college. Such intellective measures as academic aptitude tests and past grades, long used to predict a student's academic potential, have not alone nor consistently been able to predict the academic future for many disadvantaged college students. Miller and O'Connor (1969) in a study of black college students found that scores on Fricke's Achiever Personality scale to be significantly related to the college grades of women and low ability men, and were independent of Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores. For males in this study neither high school percentile rank nor SAT bore any relationship to freshmen grades. Other studies similarly found that while high school grades and SAT scores are valid predictors of college grades for whites, they are not valid for blacks (Temp, 1971; Thomas and Stanley, 1969).

What then are the predictors, more sensitive to the cognitive/affective organizations of these groups? Among the personality factors studied, the cluster of variables referred to as achievement motivation or the need for academic achievement have received attention at all grade levels (Cameron, 1968; Epps, 1969; Green and Farquhar, 1965; Soloman, Houlihan, Busse, and Parelius, 1971). Although these

studies show a positive correlation between various measures of achievement motivation and minority academic performance, the precise relationship between motivation and performance is unclear, and different investigators have used different measurements of achievement motivation. The Epps (1969) study, for example, shows that different measures of achievement motivation are not always related to each other and, therefore, are not really measuring the same thing.

It has also been maintained that minority group children and youth in general have less capability to sustain effort on tasks with no immediate external reward and put forth less effort in achievement situations that require intrinsic motivation, and thus can be said to have less of a need for achievement than non-minority higher social status students (Katz, 1967). Banks and Mc Quater (1976), however, have suggested that task-interest and task-liking are mediators in the achievement orientation of blacks. Black subjects have been shown to seek more information and to persist longer in performance at tasks of high interest value. What is more, in their research, Banks, Mc Quater, and Hubbard (1975) found that black and white adolescents were equally effort-oriented (intrinsically-motivated) on high- and low-interest tasks. Only on low-interest tasks, however, were black subjects more concerned with extrinsic factors of success or failure in performance than were white subjects. Banks and Mc Quater (1976) suggest than individuals whose developmental experiences are subcultural may develop divergent interests, which the dominant society does not reinforce as valuable. For this group the activities which are deemed intrinsically valuable are unrewarded, while the relatively unfamiliar--and thus

low-interest--skills and activities of the larger society become associated with extrinsic rewards. For blacks disliked tasks may be those associated with extrinsic reinforcement; they expect little non-material reinforcement such as social approval or social comparison from the dominant society, with which these skills are associated. Such research indicates that blacks are as able as whites to sustain effort-orientations (intrinsically motivated) except on tasks that they associate with skills that they feel are not socially reinforced for them or are alien to their primary group.

Aspects of self such as self-concept and self-image have also been studied as correlates of the academic behavior of minority students. Cameron (1968) found self-concept to be positively associated with the academic achievement of black college women, a finding that confirms the results of studies on high school populations of black students, males and females (Epps, 1969; Green and Farquhar, 1965). Since ability was controlled in all of these self-concept studies it is reasonable to conclude that minority students who express a positive self-regard and a positive feeling about their ability to perform in school actually do perform better than those who see themselves and their abilities negatively. Other personality factors have also been studied as correlates of academic achievement, although insufficiently to draw any general conclusions. Atchison (1968) for example, found that general anxiety was positively and significantly related to the grade point average IQ of black college students. Benjamin (1970) administered the California Psychological Inventory to a group of high achieving and low achieving black high school students. He found that academically successful males had a higher mean score than the unsuccessful males on the following

scales: responsibility, socialization, communality, achievement via conformance, intellectual efficiency, and a sense of well-being. The successful females had higher mean scores than the unsuccessful females on the first four scales mentioned above.

Using a Jungan typology translated into the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Levy, Murphy, and Carlson (1972) found that a sensing and judging orientation was preeminent among a population of black undergraduates at an all-black college, which suggests a concrete orientation toward facts rather than openness and imaginativeness (an intuitive and perceptive orientation), which is the ideal for liberal arts students. (The notion that intuition and perception are associated with academic achievement, creativity and investment in intellectual projects and innovative activities is derived from studies of white college students.) This confirms the findings of Hedegard and Brown (1969), who, analyzing data obtained by administering the Omnibus Personality Inventory (OPI), found that their black freshmen at an integrated college had a more concrete and tangible view (rather than abstract and intellectual) than their white counterparts. Their profiles resembled those of engineering and nursing students rather than those of white liberal arts students. In accounting for this outcome the researchers rejected a response bias--i.e., that the black males especially responded in ways they thought the tester might find desirable rather than as they actually felt--since the OPI data were consistent with other data on the respondents' plans and experiences and reactions to particular situations. They also found that the black students

in their study seemed distrustful and under tight emotional control and showed a general levelling of affect. It has been thought that such responses to the environment may inhibit the learning through social interaction (peer and student-teacher relationships) on which the college experience is based. However, seemingly "unpromising" as a concrete intellectual orientation and a distancing response to social situations may be for college success, it is not completely clear how they affect motivation and ultimately performance. In addition, in understanding the personality of minority students in a traditionally white institution, one should never overlook the complex ways that the absence of previous social approval or reinforcement affect current orientations. A general wariness and a concrete intellectual orientation may almost be a necessary expedient for minority students to achieve success in an alien world.

A number of studies have examined other dynamics of motivation to suggest what constitutes the achievement orientation of minority students. Coleman, et al (1966) in their influential report found that a sense of internal control as distinct from a belief in external determinants of behavior and events explained more of the variance in achievement for black students than for white students and explained more of the variance for black students than any other measure of academic behavior, except family background. A number of researchers have questioned the sensitivity of this internal/external dichotomy, growing out of Rotter's social learning theory (1966), and maintain that Rotter's Internal-External Control of Reinforcement Scale does not sufficiently distinguish between "personal control" and "control ideology" which they have found are sensitive measures of the achievement orientation of blacks (Gurin and Epps, 1975; Gurin, Gurin, Lao, Beattie, 1969; Lao, 1970;

Leon, 1974). A sense of personal control is the conviction that one is competent to control what happens in his life. Control ideology refers to an individual's belief about what determines outcomes in the society. Gurin, et al (1969) found that when these two types of items were scored separately on the Rotter scale, it was found that high achieving black students scored as "internals" on personal control and as "externals" on ideological control while low achieving blacks scored just the opposite. The high achievers were thus able to recognize that they were not personally responsible for such events as racial discrimination, for example, while low achievers were blaming themselves. In more personal situations the high achievers accepted responsibility for outcomes while the low achievers did not. In a full report of their findings of a study of black college students, Gurin and Epps (1975) suggested that the personal control and ideological meanings of internal control have different motivational implications. Repeatedly, students with a higher sense of internal personal control achieved higher grades and performed better on achievement tests. These students also more often expressed intentions to go on to graduate school and aspired to jobs that demanded high ability and were more prestigious and nontraditional. By contrast, male students with an internal control ideology—those, for example, who had inculcated the Protestant ethic that hard work and individual effort are the ways to get ahead but yet doubted their ability to control what happens to them, who believed that internal virtues paid off for others but not for them—aspired to jobs with fewer ability demands, less prestige and greater traditionality. With students with a low sense of personal control, an internal ideology was also

associated with significantly lower grades in college and on an anagrams task administered in the study to measure motivation.

As with aspirations there is the question about sex differences in motives to achieve success. Analyzing the findings from the administration of the Thematic Apperception Test to four-year and two-year black college women, Weston and Mednick (1970) concluded that because black women expressed less fear of success their achievement orientation differed from that of white women. The relationship of social class and fear of success was not clear from the findings of this study although the researchers suggested that is is more likely that black middle class women would resemble their white counterparts in fears about motives to achieve success. In a subsequent study Puryear and Mednick (1974) found that black militant college women expressed a greater motive to avoid success than less militant women. It was felt that this may have been in response to the rhetoric of the black militant movement, which encourages black women to redefine their position of dominance in black society and to become more passive and supportive of a man. They also found that black militancy and fear of success were most closely related for those women who did not report a permanent attachment to a man--women who had not achieved a conventional sex role success would thus have more to fear from academic achievement. This finding, they feel, indicates that the dynamics of achievement motivation may be similar to that of white women, who fear academic success less when they are attached to a man.

Gurin and Epps (1975) studied the ways in which the desire for security would contribute to avoidance motivation among their population of students in black colleges who came from a past of economic hardships and thus would be more likely to make choices that secure their future. They found that measures of desire for security as an avoidance motive clarified the motivational dynamics of male students far more than those of female students. The security concerns of women proved totally irrelevant to their academic and other aspiration and performance, but inhibited their occupational strivings. The most anxious women choose occupations that demanded less ability and had less prestige. (The researchers did not study the dynamics of the motive to avoid success among these women who might see achievement as a threat to their femininity and conventional sex role success).

Persistence in College

As noted previously, access to higher education institutions is no guarantee that low status and minority students will remain. Their persistence is a function of their characteristic response to the higher education experience and the nature of the institutional life they encounter. Data from general studies point specifically to the factors affecting the persistence of this group. Astin (1975) in a recent study of the college student dropouts analyzed the longitudinal and multi-institutional data collected in the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) study jointly conducted by the Laboratory for Research on Higher Education at UCLA and the American Council on Education. He found that a student's academic ability had the greatest validity in predicting whether a student would

drop out, followed by a degree plan at the time of college entrance, religious background and current preference, concern about college finances, study habits, and the educational attainment of parents. Students who aspire to a doctorate or professional degree are less likely to drop out than students who aspire to a bachelor's or "other" degree. Students whose parents are Protestant and themselves have no religious preference are more dropout-prone than students with Jewish parents, who consider themselves Jewish, or those with Catholic parents whose own religious preference is Catholic. Racially, whites and Orientals have the largest dropout rates, whereas Chicanos and American Indians have the highest. (The high dropout rate of Chicanos is largely attributable to their high concentration rate in two-year colleges, where the dropout rate is highest.) Students' own estimates of their chances of staying in college are usually accurate. A student's study habits remain good indicators of dropout-proneness; interestingly, for black students, heavy cigarette smoking is a strong predictor of dropping out, possibly because it interferes with concentration or causes physiological changes or is an indication of some anxiety or tension. Family income and parent's educational level show a clear-cut relationship to dropout-proneness, the higher income or educational level, the less the chance the student will drop out. Among freshmen women, being married or planning marriage was negatively related to persistence, although the opposite was the case with men. For both, having children increased the chance for dropping out. Astin thus suggests that students from low income families are more prone to drop out because of their minority status, less educated parents, lesser ability and

lower aspiration and motivation, poorer study habits, and greater concern about finances. However, persistence rates among blacks (especially black women) have been at least high as, and possibly higher than, the rates of non-black students of comparable ability (Astin, 1972). If one turns to acutal college experiences, one finds that there are situational mitigating factors which increase the rate of persistence of low income and minority youth, despite predictions.

As suggested above, since blacks are more likely than whites to give financial difficulties as reasons for dropping out (43 percent versus 27 percent), the availability of financial aid clearly has a positive effect on retention. Support in the form of scholarships and grants and participation in work-study programs have a positive effect on the persistence of low income and black students (Astin, 1975; Astin and Bisconti, 1972). The amount of grant support seems to be a major factor in black student persistence. Reliance on savings or other assets appears especially to decrease the chances of completion of black students attending white colleges. Loans, except large ones and in combination with work-study programs, tend not to have any positive effect on persistence (Astin, 1975). Membership in a sorority or fraternity or participation in a honors program or extracurricular activities like varsity athletics increases the disadvantaged student's persistence in college (Astin et al, 1972), as does part-time on-campus employment (Astin, 1975). Living away from home, particularly in a dormitory, is particularly related to persistence for male students, even if they live in a private room or apartment; living away from home for women

may reduce their chances to remain in college if they choose a private residence, as opposed to a dormitory or sorority house (Astin, 1975). This may suggest that involvement in the life of the college, either through peer pressure, special attention, or simply presence in the college's physical plant or surroundings enhances a student's persistence.

There are several institutional or situational factors which also affect student persistence. There is a greater retention rate in private universities in any region and in public four-year colleges in the northeastern and southern states (Astin, 1975). This finding may be attributable to the negative effect of the institutions at the lowest selectivity level (two-year colleges) in other parts of the country, where students are most dropout-prone. However, controlling for the effect, Astin (1975) concluded that students in the institutions with greater retention rates had more access to financial aid, dormitory residence facilities, and more opportunities for campus work, which enhanced their involvement in college life and thus increased their chance for persisting. Overall, institutional selectivity seems to be positively associated with student persistence, especially among institutions of moderate selectivity (Astin, 1975). It is likely that an emphasis on scholarship and social sanctions concerning academic achievement has a positive effect on the persistence of the low status student (Astin, et al, 1972). In general, level of tuition is not associated with persistence, except high tuition has a significant negative effect among blacks attending black colleges and a borderline effect on blacks attending white colleges. For low-income males, high tuition slightly reduces chances of dropout, but increases the chances for women. Possibly there is more financial aid available in institutions with high tuition, and men might be receiving larger stipends or

scholarships (Astin, 1975). The persistence of blacks is greater if they attend a black college. This may be because of the greater feeling of alienation at a white college (rather than differences in academic standards); black men, especially, feel greater alienation at white colleges and are more involved in racial conflicts (Astin, 1975). Academic performance in college (grades, number of courses taken and completed) remains the major factor in college retention (Astin, 1975; Lavin, 1974; Rossman, Astin, Astin, and El-Khawas, 1975); college grades appear to influence persistence directly independent of initial variations in ability and family background, financial aid and working during college, residence, or type of institution (Astin, 1975). For the black student grades in the "B" range (GPA: 2.75-3.24) have the strongest positive effect on persistence; in addition, credit by examination (rather than by earning credits through traditional course work and grades) is significantly associated with college persistence for black students in both black and white colleges (Astin, 1975).

Conclusion

A small but significant number of black students in the Astin (1975) study who did not exhibit the potential for academic achievement received high grades and consequently completed their studies. Why did they defy prediction? It may be that the opportunity to attend and succeed college makes some students more persistent and motivates them to improve their performance. Leon (1974) found that black and Puerto Rican students admitted as freshmen to college under a special entrance arrangement who achieved better academically than others in the program at the end of the first semester showed a greater sense of personal control over their lives at the end of the school year, than they had reported previously. With greater academic success they felt a greater sense of personal control. One should thus ask whether opportunity creates a dynamic process where academic success and a greater sense of personal control work to fulfill each other.

References

Astin, A.W. Preventing students from dropping out. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1975.

Astin, H.S.; Astin, A.W.; Bisconti, A.S.; and Frankel, H.W. Higher education and the disadvantaged student. Washington, D.C.: University Research Corporation, Human Services Press, 1972.

Astin, H.S., and Bisconti, A.S. Career plans of black and other non-white college graduates. Report no. 3. Bethelehem, Pa.: The CPC Foundation, 1973.

Atkinson, J.W., and Feather, N.T. A theory of achievement motivation. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1966.

Bayer, A., and Boruch, F. Black and white freshmen entering four-year colleges. Educational Record, 1969, 50, 371-386.

Banks, W.C.; Mc Quater, G.; and Hubbard, J.L. Tasking-liking and intrinsic-extrinsic achievement orientation in black adolescents. Unpublished manuscript, Princeton University, 1975.

Banks, W.C., and Mc Quater, G. Achievement motivation and black children. IRCD Bulletin, 1976, 11(4)

Benjamin, J.A. A study of the social psychological factors related to the academic success of Negro high school students. Doctoral dissertation, Northwestern University, 1969.

Cameron, H.K. Nonintellectual correlates of academic achievement. Journal of Negro Education, 1968, 37, 252-257.

Coleman, J.; Campbell, E.; Hobson, C.; Mc Partland, J.; Mood, A.; Weinfelt, F.; and York, R. Equality of educational opportunity. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Office of Education, 1966. ED 012 275.

College Entrance Examination Board. Panel on Financing Low Income and Minority Students in Higher Education. Toward equal educational opportunity for higher education: A report. New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1973.

Cross, K.P. Beyond the open door: New students to higher education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1971.

Dispenzieri, A.; Giniger, S.; Riechman, W.; and Levy, M. College performance of disadvantaged students as a function of ability and personality. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1971, 18, 298-305.

Epps, E.G. Family and achievement: A study of the relation of family backgrounds to achievement orientation and performance among urban Negro high school students. Final report. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Survey Research Center, 1969. ED 027 592.

Froomkin, J. Aspirations, enrollments and resources. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Office of Education, 1970.

Gordon, E.W. Equal opportunity in higher education: The current state of the art and recommendations for change. IRCD Bulletin, 1976, 11 (1), 1-6.

Green, R.L., and Farquhar, W. Negro academic motivation and scholastic achievement. Journal of Educational Psychology, 1965, 56, 241-243.

Gurin, P.; Gurin, G.; Lao, R.; and Beattie, M. Internal-external control in the motivational dynamics of Negro youth. Journal of Social Issues, 1969, 25, 29-53.

Gurin, P., and Epps, E.G. Black consciousness, identity, and achievement: A study of students in historically black colleges. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1975.

Hedegard, J.M., and Brown, D.R. Encounters of some Negro and white freshmen with a public multiversity. Journal of Social Issues, 1969, 25, 131-144.

Katz, I. The socialization of academic motivation in minority group children, in Nebraska symposium on motivation, ed. D. Levine. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967.

Lao, R. Internal-external control and competent and innovative behavior among Negro college students. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1970, 14, 263-270.

Lavin, D. Summary of the report: Open admissions at the City University of New York; a description of academic outcomes after two years. New York: City University of New York, Office of Program and Policy Research, 1974.

Leon, G. Personality change in the specially admitted disadvantaged students after one year in college. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 1974, 30, 522-528

Levy, N.; Murphy, C.; and Carlson, R. Personality types among Negro college students. Educational and Psychological Measurement, 1972, 32, 641-653.

Lott, B., and Lott, A. Negro and white youth. New York: Appleton-Century, Crofts, 1963.

Miller, D.M. and O'Connor, P. Achiever personality and academic success among disadvantaged college students. Journal of Social Issues, 1969, 25, 103-116.

Ogbu, J.U. The next generation: An ethnography of education in an urban neighborhood. New York: Academic Press, 1974.

Philips, B. School-related aspirations of children with different socio-cultural backgrounds. Journal of Negro Education, 1972, 41, 48-52.

Puryear, G., and Mednick, M. Black militancy, affective attachment, and the fear of success in black college women. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1974, 42, 263-266.

Rossman, J.; Astin, H. S.; Astin, A.W.; and El-Khawas, E. Open admissions at City University of New York: An analysis of the first year. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1975.

Rotter, J.E. Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement. Psychological Monographs, 1966, 80, (Whole No. 609), 1-28.

Sewell, W.H. Inequality of opportunity for higher education. American Sociological Review, 1971, 36, 793-809.

Solomon, D.; Houlihan, K.A.; Busse, T.V.; and Parelius, R.J. Parent behavior and child academic achievement, achievement striving, and related personality characteristics. Genetic Psychology Monographs, 1971, 83, 173-273.

Temp, G. Validity of the SAT for blacks and whites in thirteen integrated institutions. Journal of Educational Measurement, 1971, 8, 245-251.

Thomas, C.L., and Stanley, J.C. Effectiveness of high school grades for predicting college grades of black students: A review and discussion. Journal of Educational Measurement, 1969, 6, 203-215.

Weston, P., and Mednick, M. Race, social class and the motive to avoid success. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 1970, 1, 284-291.